

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02 TRSE-00 XMB-07

OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 STR-08 INT-08

NEA-10 MC-02 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 SCEM-02 SCI-06 /235 W  
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R 211825Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9469

INFO USMISSION NATO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRUSSELS 7449

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, EEC, NATO

SUBJECT: TRENDS REPORT ON BELGIUM

REF: ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S LETTER OF DECEMBER 4.

1. SUMMARY. IN EARLY 1974 THE ENERGY CRISIS AND THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT ARE LIKELY TO EMAN IN THE FOREFRONT OF BELGIAN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLITICS. WHILE THE US MIGHT FIND IT DIFFICULT TO FOCUS BELGIAN ATTENTION ON OTHER MATTERS, WE SHOULD CONSISTENTLY PRESS FOR THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT OF US MIDDLE EAST POLICIES AS THE BEST OF APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF THE OIL SHORTAGE, AND OF US PROPOSALS FOR ATLANTIC WIDE COOPERATION AS SET FORTH IN THE SECRETARY'S PILGRIMS SPEECH.

HISTORICAL CONSTANTS OF BELGIAN FOREIGN POLICY WILL TEND TO REINFORCE THE BELGIAN DISPOSITION TO MEDIATE WITHIN THE EC-9 AND TO PLAY A FACILITATIVE ROLE IN PROMOTING A CLOSER AND MORE  
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EFFECTIVE COOPERATION IN AN ATLANTIC COMMUNITY FREMEWORK

BETWEEN THE EC-9 AND THE US. HENCE,  
CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE GOB WILL ENABLE US TO INFLUENCE  
THE WAY BELGIUM EMPLOYS HERE WEIGHT IN NATO AND THE  
EC-9. END SUMMARY.

2. CURRENT ANF FUTURE TRENDS IN BELGIUM MAY BE  
BEST OBSERVED, FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS ANF FUTURE  
PERIODIC ANALYTICAL REPORTING, AGAINST A FIXED  
BACKGROUND FORMED BY BASIC FEATURES OF BELGIAN  
SOCIETY AND FOREIGN POLICY. AS A SMALL, DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY  
WITH A PLURALISTIC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC  
SYSTEM, SITUATED GEOGRAPHICALLY ON THE ATLANTIC  
FRINGE OF THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT BETWEEN FRANCE,  
GERMANY AND GREAT BRITAIN, STRONGLY DEPENDENT ON  
FOREIGN TRADE AND COLLECTIVE MILITARY SECURITY,  
BELGIUM UNDER SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENT HAS:

- CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED EUROPEAN UNIFICATION  
WITHIN AN ATLANTIC FRAMEWORK;
- LOYALLY AND CORDIALLY HOSTED THE BUREAUCRATIC  
INSTITUTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND  
NATO;
- ENCOURAGED SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT IN  
BELGIUM BY US BUSINESS INTERESTS;
- SHARED AND SUPPORTED US OBJECTIVES IN THE  
UN AND ITS RELATED AGENCIES
- GIVEN EARLY ATTENTION TO  
DETENTE WITH THE USSR, EASTERN EUROPE,  
AND CHINA.

3. FOCUS ON BELGIAN DOMESTIC FUNDAMENTALS SHOWS A  
TRADITIONAL AND CONTINUING DEPENDENCE ON GOVERNMENT  
BY SUCCESSIVE, EPHEMERAL COALITIONS OF SOCIALISTS,  
CATHOLICS, AND FREE-ENTERPRISE LIBERALS. THIS  
DEPENDENCE HAS BEEN RENDERED MORE COMPLEX STILL BY  
THE NEED TO ACCOMMODATE THE COMPETING ECONOMIC  
AND CULTURAL DEMANDS OF TWO DISTINCTIVELY DIFFERENT  
ETHNIC COMMUNITIES. IN THE PAST THE COSTS OF ACCOMMODATION TO  
THESE COMPLEXITIES TENDED TO BE HIDDEN  
IN THE SHADOWS CAST BY LEADERS OF GREAT PERSONAL  
COMPETENCE SUCH AS PAUL VAN ZEELAND, PAUL-HENRI SPAAK,  
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AND GASTON EYSKENS. THE TIMES ARE  
SUCH, APPARENTLY, AS NO LONGER TO CALL FORTH  
SUCH FIGURES, EITHER IN BELGIUM OR ELSEWHERE IN  
EUROPE.

4. US-BELGIAN RELATIONS HAVE BEEN MARKED RECENTLY  
BY FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE'S OFFICIAL VISIT  
TO WASHINGTON AND HIS RECEPTION BY THE SECRETARY

AND THEIR WELL PUBLICIZED BILATERAL TALKS IN BRUSSELS. THESE MEETINGS HELPED ENHANCE THE PRESTIGE VAN ELSLANDE NEEDS AS A SMALL POWER MINISTER. THE MEETINGS HAVE ALSO GIVEN VAN ELSLANDE A FIRST-HAND APPRECIATION OF US DISENCHANTMENT WITH EUROPE'S RESPONSE TO OUR 1973 ATLANTIC INITIATIVE AND PERHAPS STEELED HIM TO CONCERT WITH OTHERS TO INHIBIT FRANCE, OR FRANCE AND THE UK, FROM RUNNING ROUGHSHOD OVER THE SMALLER EUROPEAN ALIES.

5. BELGIUM'S CURRENT MIDDLE EAST POLICY HAS BEEN DETERMINED PRIMARILY BY HER MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY', AND IN THAT FRAMEWORK, HAS BEEN MARKED BY AN EVEN-HANDED APPROACH THAT THE ARAB COUNTRIES RATE AS "NEUTRAL" IN CONTRAST TO THE "FRIENDLY" RATING WON BY THE FRENCH AND THE ENGLISH. THE GOB HAS THUS FAR RESISTED ARAB THREATS AND BLANDISHMENTS AND HAS NOT UNILATERALLY DEPARTED FROM THE POLICY LINE IN THE EC-9 DECLARATION OF NOVEMBER 6. THE BELGIANS HAVE SUPPORTED THE US AND SOVIET PEACE MAKING ROLES. THOUGH THEY HAVE DEPLORED THE ABSENCE OF A UNITARY EUROPEAN VOICE AT GENEVA, THEY HAVE DONE SO WITHOUT THAT BARELY HIDDEN RESENTMENT SHOWN BY THE FRENCH AND BRITISH. BELGIAN OFFICIAL AND POPULAR ATTITUDES HAVE BEEN SYMPATHETIC TO THE ASPIRATIONS BOTH OF ISRAEL AND OF THE ARAB COUNTRIES. WHETHER THESE ATTITUDES EVOLVED TOWARD RESENTMENT AGAINST EITHER ISRAEL OR THE US WILL DEPEND CONSIDERABLY ON HOW EFFECTIVELY WE EXPLAIN AND JUSTIFY OUR POLICIES.

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INFO USMISSION NATO  
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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6. BELGIUM'S RELATIONS WITH THIRD-WORLD COUNTRIES CURRENTLY ARE DOMINATED BY PROBLEMS WITH ZAIRE. FOLLOWING PRIME MINISTER LEBURTON'S PRIVATE VISIT TO ZAIRE IN SEPTEMBER, AND AMICABLE TALKS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL IN OCTOBER, PRESIDENT MOBUTU ANNOUNCED HIS SWEEPING ECONOMIC REFORMS OF NOVEMBER 30. THE NEW MEASURES WILL INVOLVE EXTENSIVE TAKE-OVER OF BELGIAN OWNED BUSINESSES, SOME WITHOUT COMPENSATION. A MAJOR CRISIS IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES SHOULD NOT RESULT UNLESS MOBUTU TAKES THE FURTHER STEP OF GREATLY MODIFYING THE AGREEMENT UNDER WHICH SOCIETE GENERALE IS REIMBURSED FOR THE 1967 TAKEOVER OF THE UNION MINIERE COPPER OPERATION IN ZAIRE. WE EXPECT THAT MOBUTU WILL SEEK TO MODIFY THE AGREEMENT BUT THE FORM THE MODIFICATION MIGHT TAKE IS STILL UNCLEAR.

7. ON CURRENT EVIDENCE, NO MAJOR STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN BELGIUM DOMESTIC POLITICS APPEAR LIKELY BEFORE THE GENERAL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR MAY 1975. THE  
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DIRECTION OF MOVEMENT, MEANWHILE, IS TOWARDS ACCOMMODATION OF (A) THE REGIONALIZATION PROCESS BY WHICH SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTROL IS DEVOLVED FROM THE CENTRAL/NATIONAL LEVEL TOWARD LOCAL LEVELS WHERE AUTHORITY IS LINGUISTICALLY HOMOGENEOUS, AND (B) THE EMERGENCE OF YOUNGER POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIPS.

8. THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC REGIONALIZATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF BELGIUM FOREIGN POLICY WAS DEMONSTRATED IN THE OCTOBER 1973 CABINET REORGANIZATION. LINGUISTIC AND POLITICAL PARTY CONSIDERATIONS PROVED AT LEAST AS IMPORTANT AS COMPETENCE IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS. UPSETTING TO IDEALISTS AND PRACTICAL MEN ALIKE, BELGIUM'S PROBLEM IS PROBABLY NO WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM OF ALLOCATING POSTS BY ETHNIC, LINGUISTIC, REGIONAL OR NATIONALITY RATIOS PECULIAR TO, LET US SAY, YUGOSLAVIA AND SWITZERLAND. UN-

HAPPILY, THE BELGIAN PARTY CONSOLIDATION LEAVES THE FOREIGN MINISTER OUTSIDE THE "INNER CORE" OR "KERNAL" CABINET THAT IS SUPPOSED TO PROVIDE EXECUTIVE GUIDANCE IN BELGIUM'S THREE-PARTY GOVERNMENT OF SOME 28 MINISTERS.

9. WE HAVE REPORTED OCCASIONAL SNIPING AT PRO-NATO POLICIES COMING FROM PACIFISTS/NEUTRALISTS ELEMENTS ON THE FRINGE OF THE CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST AND SOCIALIST PARTIES. THE ISSUE IS NOT YET WHETHER THESE ANTO-NATO ELEMENTS WILL COME TO POWER, BUT WHETHER THE ORTHODOX PARTY LEADERSHIP MAY GO TOO FAR IN SEEKING TO NEUTRALIZE THEM BY CATERING TO THEIR PRECONCEPTIONS. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT BELGIAN GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR DEFENSE REFORM WILL REMAIN WITHIN LIMITS REASONABLE IN THE MAINTENANCE OF BELGIUM'S DEFENSE CAPABILITY.

10. RECENT EVENTS AFFECTING BELGIUM AND ITS ROLE IN NATO AND THE EC SUGGEST THAT IN THE COMING WEEKS, WE GIVE CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:  
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--HOW SERIOUSLY WILL BELGIUM'S HERETOFORE STEADILY INCREASING PROSPERITY BE SET BACK BY THE OIL CRISIS?

-- IN WHAT WAYS WILL THIS CRISIS IMPOSE FURTHER STRAINS ON BELGIUM'S ABILITY TO COMBINE ITS EUROPEAN UNIFICATION AND ATLANTIC SOLIDARITY POLICIES?

--HOW WILL WE DEAL WITH ADVERSE EFFECT ON NATO BURDENSARING OF INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT GROWING OUT OF THE OIL CUTBACKS, AS WELL AS A LIKELY CYCLICAL DOWNTURN IN THE ECONOMY?

--WHAT WILL BE THE REPERCUSSIONS AS AMERICAN COMPANIES ARE OBLIGED TO LAY OFF GROWING NUMBER OF BELGIAN EMPLOYEES?

11. THE PRINCIPAL CONSLUSION WE DRAW FROM CURRENT UNCERTAINTIES IS THAT US ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL, AND NATIONAL INTERESTS IN BELGIUM WILL BEST BE SERVED BY OUR SEEKING MAXIMUM CONSULTATION OF THE ENERGY SITUATION AND OTHER ISSUES CENTRAL TO BELGIUM'S ROLES IN NATO AND THE EC. STRAUZ-HUPE

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